
MEMORANDUM

TO: COLCHESTER SELECT BOARD
FROM: COLCHESTER PLANNING COMMISSION
SUBJECT: BAYSIDE PROPERTY
DATE: 1/14/2004
CC: SARAH HADD, TOWN PLANNER & GLEN CUTTITTA, RECREATION DIRECTOR

In response to the Select Board request to the Planning Commission to research the community's interest in the purchase and use of the Hazelett Bayside Property, The Planning Commission held two public meetings. The first meeting on October 15th consisted of a public forum facilitated by the Planning Commission Chair, Steve Wark. The forum participants suggested a wide range of uses for the property from conserving it as open space to letting the property go to residential development. However the two uses predominantly favored by the majority of the forum participants were a Community Center (first choice) and a Waterfront Center (second choice). A community center could easily contain many of the specific uses suggested by the forum (please see attached sheet).

The second meeting on December 2nd was a public meeting to focus on a potential Community Center use for the land and to solicit additional feedback from the community. At the end of the Dec. 2nd meeting the Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the Select Board that the article for purchase of the Hazelett property be placed on the ballot with its primary use designated as a Community Center. To facilitate the public meeting, members of the Recreation Committee and Community Center Committee attended and made an informal presentation and fielded questions regarding the proposed Community Center. With the exception of one person, all nineteen of the attendees supported the purchase of the land with the assumption that the construction of a community center would be the first priority for use of the property. There was a central theme to the questions relating to costs. Many of the participants wanted answers to questions such as:

- Cost of the bond to the taxpayers for the purchase of the property (\$ on tax bill)
- Cost of holding the property until it was developed
- Cost of development of the Community Center
- Operational costs of the Community Center and the source of these funds

Other questions raised were:

- Is there sufficient septic capacity on the site for a community center
- Is there sufficient land for setbacks, buffer zones, and stormwater treatment for a community center
- Are there any environmental issues such as protected species etc. that would complicate construction on the property?

The question was asked of the Recreation Committee whether, compared to other properties possibly available, is the Hazelett property the best location for a Community Center. There was general consensus of the members of the Recreation Committee and Community Center Committee

that this was the case. Reasons stated for this were the close proximity to the schools for after school activities and proximity to Bayside Park. It was pointed out that if the bypass envisioned by the Lakeshore Drive Forum is constructed, it could be routed through the Hazelett property, and Bayside Park could be made contiguous with the Hazelett property and community center. It was also pointed out that the window of opportunity for the town to have control of what will be built on the property is closing. Developers have approached the property owners to purchase the land and this voting cycle will most probably be the last opportunity for the town.

At the end of the Dec. 2nd meeting the Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the Select Board that the article for purchase of the Hazelett property be placed on the ballot with its primary use designated as a Community Center. It was the general consensus of the Commission, the Recreation Committee, and the Community Center Committee that a lot of education would have to occur so as to not confuse voters regarding the ballot item. Several people at the December 2nd meeting believed that the land and the center would be on the ballot together. The Town will have to develop a strong education campaign around the ballot item noting that the March ballot will be for the purchase of the land only. One member of the Community Center Committee estimated that the land would cost a household with a \$200,000 home about \$20 a year for the land. Other persons within the audience stated that this type of information was important for voters to know. The Town would have to go back to the voters at a latter time to bond for a community center. That next vote may be in the next year or two because alternative methods for paying for the center, such as fund raising, are being explored to defer the cost from the tax payers as much as possible.

The Commission and all of the other individuals in Town that have been working on the community center would like to petition the Select Board to not only put the item back on the ballot but to move forward with an informative educational campaign on what is being voted for and why. While the Planning Commission has conducted the necessary research for this project, the Commission sees itself as advisory to the Select Board on this matter. In making its recommendation to the Board, the Commission has fulfilled its role however the Commission remains willing to assist the Board in future actions and endeavors. There are several involved citizens, volunteers from the Commission and the Recreation Committee that wish to participate in public education of the ballot item. These individuals may require funding to conduct this educational campaign. The Commission would recommend the Select Board work with these volunteers to educate and inform the community of the ballot item.

The Commission would like to thank the Select Board for the opportunity to assist in this important community project. The Commission looks forward to assisting the Board in future projects and working with them on proposed regulatory changes in the near future.

Respectively Submitted,

Approved this 16th day of December, 2003

Planning Commission